8 Strategies for Citizen Engagement: (i) Shifting the Focus of ICT Design Practice

For citizens to be actively engaged in shaping their digital futures requires that they have both the opportunity and the capacity to do so. This, in turn, means that governments, ICT system providers, manufacturers and other agencies need to recognize the sociotechnical implications of strategies and plans, and the need to engage with citizens in making decisions and shaping solutions. This requires a change in focus from the traditional view of either policy making or ICT design, which can only occur if it becomes part of the culture and routine practice of society and of organizations. A further requirement is to build the capability of citizens and other stakeholders, giving them the knowledge and skills to work in this new way.

Modern life places heavy demands on its citizens. Spending time and effort to engage in informing ICT design decisions is an additional demand which many may not welcome – however desirable the long-term benefits. Equally, those with job responsibilities for achieving the engagement of members of the public and relevant others in projects and exercises may find this an onerous task. The inherent difficulties are often exacerbated by the lack of guidance available on either the purpose of engagement/participation or on how to achieve it.

The aim of this chapter and Chapter 9 is to make accessible to those who need it, the available knowledge for embedding citizen engagement as a normal part of ICT development projects – i.e. institutionalizing it. The final chapter in this suite of three considers the challenging issue of bringing about culture change throughout society to alter thinking about the role of technology in society and the part citizens play in defining that role. Thus these last three chapters describe complementary strategies for achieving citizen engagement/participation.

8.1 Introducing the Strategies

The strategies discussed in these chapters are instantiations of the application of change management principles encapsulated in Gleicher's formula which is described in Chapter 7. Their function is to inform the definition, content and structure of change programmes necessary to bring about the required shift in ICT design practice. Although the strategies do, of course, offer guidance, they differ fundamentally from countless 'design guidelines' published over the past decades in their underlying assumptions. The distinction is important and warrants further explanation. Many guidelines, developed with the best of intentions to improve ICT design from a human-centred perspective, have failed to have significant impact. This is despite the fact that the advice is often sound and based upon valid research data. The lack of impact is because ICT designers generally find their customary ways of doing things satisfactory and comfortable from their perspective. Change theories tell us that human beings are unlikely and reluctant to change unless we see compelling reasons for doing so.

Guidelines by their nature are not appropriate or effective as persuasion techniques. The content of most design guidelines comprises details of steps to take – and sometimes on how to do this. The formulation of design guidelines is often driven by the conviction of their developers that they are needed to improve shortcomings in ICT design. This is not a perception generally shared by the intended users of the guidelines. Developers of guidelines see their purpose to be the provision of evidence-based instructions and have achieved this very successfully in many cases. Their guidelines have generally been offered up into a vacuum where there is no 'user pull' from the design community. This helps to explain the lack of impact.

In the terms of Gleicher's formula (see Chapter 7), there are three crucial components in achieving successful change: **dissatisfaction with the status quo**, **sharing the vision** and **knowledge of the practical steps** necessary to progress towards the vision. In the context of ICT design, guidelines are the knowledge component which indicate the practical steps necessary for the change. The two other components are generally missing from projects which generate design guidelines. Without awareness and understanding of the limiting effects and costs of current design methods, there is no reason for designers to be dissatisfied with how things are and no motivation for them to change their methods and approach. Equally, the vision of the attractive rewards and benefits which are likely to follow for them as a result of the shift towards engaging with stakeholders, especially with citizens, has not been effectively communicated to

the ICT design community. The crucial message is that for guidance to be applied appropriately and to achieve the change intended, it has to be incorporated into a coherent change programme. The same principle applies to the strategies presented in this book: they can only succeed within the context of planned systemic change.

Following from the above, the assumption underlying the strategies formulated in these three chapters is that knowledge and understanding of the reasons and the need for change supersede and underpin everything else. Education and organisational support to develop human skills and institutional resources are seen as essential for achieving the envisioned scale of systemic change involved in achieving a shift in focus of ICT design methods and approaches. In other words, building capacity and developing organisational infrastructure must take priority.

To effectively 'embed' citizen engagement into ICT development projects it must become a mainstream, rather than a marginal or peripheral part of the development process. Transforming ways of doing things throughout an institution usually comes about through a gradual evolutionary process. Thus, strategies for building capacity and developing organisational infrastructure must also take account of the need to achieve longer-term cultural change.

The proposed strategies apply at three different levels: **the institution** (e.g. local council, government department, hospital, retail business etc), the **ICT project**, and **wider society** respectively. This chapter addresses the process of institutionalizing changes at the organizational level which are necessary to bring about a shift in focus of ICT design. Chapter 9, 'Tools and techniques' presents staff working at the project level with an awareness of the very many, highly varied and innovative resources available globally. These are valuable in developing their capacity to carry out job responsibilities relating to citizen engagement/participation.

The final chapter 'Achieving a culture of participation and engagement' considers strategic change of a quite different kind and of a far greater magnitude than is required at project and organisational levels. To fundamentally alter the way we all think about technological development and our role in the future shaping of our digital world is clearly extremely challenging. Change on such a scale cannot happen without the high level leadership and the support of very many stakeholders – both individuals and institutions. Only with the leadership and enthusiasm of influential bodies and individuals with the power and political will to transform established ways of doing things can ambitious institutionalized change occur on a societal scale. Some possibilities for embarking on this journey are discussed in Chapter 10.

8.2 Institutionalizing the Shift in Organisations

The content of this chapter applies primarily to institution-led citizen participation and engagement. This is because most large-scale ICT developments intended for the public take place in institutional settings (whether public sector or private sector organizations are involved). It is staff who work in these organizations who are likely to have responsibilities for gaining the participation and engagement of members of the public in different aspects of an ICT design and development project. There are, of course, generic aspects to the guidance. For example, the processes involved in communication and in envisioning alternative futures described in Chapter 9 are equally applicable in citizen-led activities. However, they are unlikely to be supported with the necessary resources more usually associated with institution-led initiatives.

Achieving a shift in ICT design away from its technical focus towards a sociotechnical focus (where citizen engagement is the norm) will draw heavily from good practice in civic planning and community development contexts. There are however some important differentiating characteristics of citizen engagement in ICT development contexts which we have taken into account in formulating the strategies presented here. Most ICT developments start with a concept (usually technological, usually developed by technologists). Then typically follow a logical sequence of steps in which the requirements are specified, the hardware and software are designed and the outcome is then implemented – again, usually by technologists. Where a user-centred approach is applied (which does not happen in all cases), then users may become involved in specifying their requirements at an early stage in the development cycle. Then, at a later stage, in testing a solution – possibly a prototype – defined and developed by ICT developers. By this second stage it is often considered too late to make more than minor modifications to the design. By contrast, when citizens are engaged successfully in public policy making and planning, following established good practice (e.g. National Forum on Health – Canada, Wyman et al. 1999) the objective is often to allow people to identify and explore alternative options at an early stage. This means that further development is focused upon preferred solutions – and avoids the wastefulness of developing ‘solutions’. Which are seen as lacking in relevance or usefulness by those in whose interests they have been developed.

In an analogous way, an approach to ICT design which involves citizens and focuses on creating sociotechnical solutions could similarly involve people in identifying and exploring options in ICT provision, envisioning outcomes and achieving consensus on preferred solutions. The preferred

solutions could then be developed and tested with greater confidence that they will successfully meet the needs of the people for whom they are intended. Engaging in technology shaping is not something with which people are generally familiar. This means they need concepts, knowledge, language and tools to be able to do this. Some of the many possibilities for enhancing understanding, envisioning, communicating and sharing ideas and so on are identified in the next chapter.

There are a great many actions required to begin the shift towards making stakeholder participation/engagement a mainstream activity in ICT projects. This includes taking a number of steps at the earliest possible stage – desirably before most decisions have been made. Examples of preparatory steps which are often relevant are the following:

- recruit a leader/champion for the engagement process;
- communicate to create awareness of the need for a new, integrated approach to ICT design (aims, approach, expected benefits etc.);
- provide education and learning opportunities;
- secure resources;
- implement a sound organisational infrastructure to support the project or initiative;
- build confidence (both of staff in the institution and of citizens in the community);
- encourage a strong 'user pull' for making citizen participation mainstream and for sharing knowledge and expertise relating to civic participation in ICT development;
- encourage greater application of an integrated design approach to enhance significantly the quality and relevance of ICT provision for citizens.

8.2.1 Action Plan for Institutionalizing Citizen Participation/ Engagement

The action plan presented in this section draws on many years of our experiences working with client organisations in both the private and public sectors. To present a rather mechanistic-looking plan may appear to contradict our earlier assertion that guidance developed out of context is unlikely to be accepted or to be relevant. However, we are frequently asked to provide planning aids which indicate the steps to take and therefore offer this as a starting point for developing a context-specific action plan, tailored to the specific circumstances of use. A four stage, twelve

point Action Plan for institutionalizing the proposed shift in focus of ICT design is therefore described in subsequent sections.

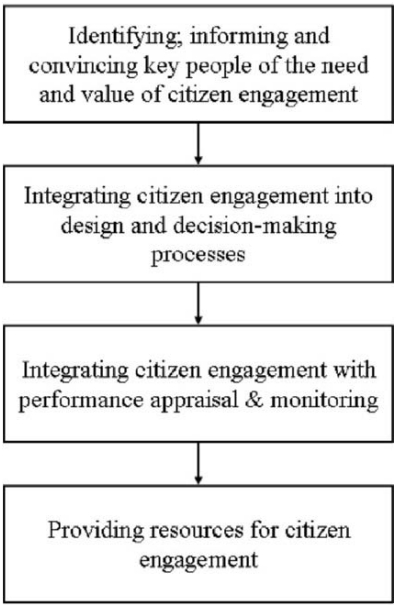

Fig. 8.1. Action plan for shifting the focus of ICT design.

8.2.2 Identifying, Informing and Convincing Key People

This stage is crucial as it seeks to achieve 'buy-in' of people in key roles to the concepts and values underpinning the engagement of citizens in ICT design and development. Powerful communication and knowledge sharing methods will be essential.

To ensure that citizen contributions inform the activities and decision-making associated with ICT developments, widespread awareness of the value and importance of citizen engagement is needed. This is especially the case among the membership of relevant steering committees, project groups, etc. where many key role holders/stakeholders have responsibility, authority or influence over decisions. People with expertise in public participation processes could be invited to promote such awareness and understanding.

To achieve such changes in mind set may need to be reinforced through formal education and training. Understanding the need for a new approach to design will be strengthened by an awareness of the theories and concepts of the social sciences, from which the principles underpinning the

integrated design approach are drawn. Opportunities for learning basic social science concepts and participatory principles do not generally form part of the curriculum for computer scientists and engineers. Yet the applications which they design have significant human and social implications. Excellent multi-media tools are now available which could support education and training in concepts and approaches relevant to citizen engagement. Designers, developers and providers would all benefit from learning these. Experiential and immersive techniques (see Chapter 9 for examples) offer powerful means of promoting rapid learning regarding perspectives of people in different roles and circumstances.

Action Points: Steps 1-4

1. Mobilize for change: identify 'change champions' who recognise the need for change in the design approach in the organisation - appoint one as a leader for the change process.
2. Identify relevant key people and consult to make changes to job descriptions/terms of reference to include citizen engagement activities and responsibilities.
3. Develop and deliver learning opportunities (desirably using experiential learning techniques) for senior people.
4. Develop and deliver awareness and education programmes (e.g. in social science concepts) and, where appropriate, opportunity for skills acquisition in citizen engagement (e.g. facilitation) for middle management and staff members including ICT design/development staff.

8.2.3 Integrating Citizen Engagement with ICT Design Methods

Participation/engagement of citizens in ICT design needs to occur throughout the development cycle. Citizens should be involved early in decisions, when ideas are still at the vision stage, "*before political interests and professional input dominate debate*" (Demos 2004). It therefore needs to be planned carefully in relation to the design methods currently in use in the organisation concerned. It may well be the case that those undertaking an ICT development project are following one of the many available methodologies, some of which are mentioned in Chapter 2. In some cases (such as in the UK public sector) there is often a formal requirement to follow a particular methodology. This may specify citizen/user involvement activities

and the stage at which they take place. The adequacy and appropriateness of this needs to be reviewed. It is also important that other experts, particularly external consultants, recognise the need for these in the activities they have been contracted to carry out. It is especially important in the award of major contracts for ICT development projects that the tender evaluation criteria include preparedness and capability to ensure genuine and active participation and engagement of users/citizens in the project.

In traditional approaches to ICT design, user input is often not sought until there is a technological concept which is to be developed. In this engineering model the purpose of the involvement is to define user requirements for the technology to be developed – leaving potential users with no 'say' in whether or not the proposed technology is appropriate or desirable. In the examples of best practice in public policy making and planning context however, citizens are likely to be consulted and engaged in agenda setting. This gives them the opportunity to define their priorities and to influence the scope, rather than the detail, of policies and plans. In ICT development projects, citizens need to be engaged at the equivalent of this agenda setting stage, i.e. earlier than is normally the case.

In the later stages of the lifecycle, there is recognition, in both the systems development context and in the public policy making and planning context, of the benefits of testing possible solutions with users/citizens through pilot projects. However, in technology development projects, the focus of testing is usually on the performance of the technology, rather than on the wider implications of the technology for its intended users. Opportunities, and support for, exploration of these human and organisational implications – in terms of project resources, skills and job design of participants – need to be built into the design process.

Action Points: Steps 5-7

5. Review membership of key decision-making bodies to ensure citizens are fully represented and engaged.
6. Incorporate citizen engagement processes and values into ICT design methods.
7. Review contractual terms/procurement criteria for employing external ICT consultants. Revise as necessary to ensure that citizen engagement processes are included as part of the terms of reference and contractual conditions.

8.2.4 Integrating Citizen Engagement with Performance Appraisal and Monitoring

The ability to engage effectively with citizens in the course of normal working must be recognised in any processes for assessing and appraising the performance of those responsible for developing ICT for the public. Only by emphasising a positive approach to the process will 'in-house' expertise and acceptance of citizen contributions develop. Additionally, the design outputs (including proposals) from every stage should be reviewed to check that they have been informed appropriately by citizens.

Evaluating the impact of ICT on people requires monitoring to ensure positive effects and to see how well the citizen engagement strategies and mechanisms are working. Audits can be undertaken to provide information to the providers, designers, developers and manufacturers on the success of the ICT delivered.

Action Points: Steps 8-10

8. Through consultation and negotiation, include citizen engagement criteria in annual assessment/performance appraisals.
9. Include citizen engagement criteria in quality assurance protocols and procedures.
10. Conduct long-term auditing of the effectiveness of citizen engagement to assess the impact of ICT and its acceptability.

8.2.5 Providing Resources for Citizen Engagement

It should be recognised that resources will be required to support the transition to the new ways of working implied by the change in focus of ICT design. Key requirements are for education, skills and a budget to support participation/engagement processes.

- *skill support*. To support citizen engagement projects in the short term, whilst expertise develops within the host organisation, experts in public participation may be required. These specialists could be external or part of an in-house group;

- *budget planning.* For a citizen engagement strategy to become a reality, adequate resources of skills, time and facilities are required. These need to be costed and given appropriate budget allocations.

In organisations where citizen participation/engagement needs to be conducted frequently, it may be worthwhile to set up a group which specialises in these processes. There are precedents for this, such as the Participation Services Unit of the Scottish Parliament (2004).

Action Points: Steps 11-12

11. Consider establishing an in-house unit of citizen engagement specialists, especially facilitators if this appears appropriate; decide location (dispersed or localized), staffing, equipment, etc.
12. Review relevant budgets and schedules to see that citizen engagement activities are included.

Table 8.1. Summary of 12 point Action Plan for Setting up Citizen Engagement

1	Mobilise for change: identify 'change champions' who recognise the need for change in the design approach in the organisation – appoint one as a leader for the change process.
2	Identify relevant key people and consult to make changes to job description/terms of reference to include citizen engagement activities and responsibilities.
3	Develop and deliver learning opportunities (desirably using experiential learning techniques) for senior people.
4	Develop and deliver awareness and education programmes (e.g. in social science concepts) and, where appropriate, opportunity for skills acquisition in citizen engagement (e.g. facilitation) for middle management and staff members including ICT design/development staff.
5	Review membership of key decision-making bodies to ensure citizens are fully represented and engaged.
6	Incorporate citizen engagement processes and values into ICT design methods.
7	Review contractual terms/procurement criteria for employing external ICT consultants. Revise as necessary to ensure that citizen engagement processes are included as part of the terms of reference and contractual conditions.
8	Through consultation and negotiation, include citizen engagement criteria in annual assessment/performance appraisals.
9	Include citizen engagement criteria in quality assurance protocols and procedures.

10 Conduct long-term auditing of the effectiveness of citizen engagement to assess the impact of ICT and its acceptability.
11 Consider establishing an in-house unit of citizen engagement specialists, especially facilitators if this appears appropriate; decide location (dispersed or localised), staffing, equipment, etc.
12 Review relevant budgets and schedules to see that citizen engagement activities are included.

8.3 Capacity Building

Successes in civic participation – whether in impoverished communities in the developing world or in leading, developed nations – are characterized by the development of skills and capabilities of the participants. Successful participation projects report the growth in confidence of participants in articulating and sharing their views and experiences, their increased knowledge and understanding of issues under consideration and ability to contribute to debate and decision-making. This contrasts with the frequently voiced expressions of concern in the media about voter apathy and cynicism of the public, especially of the young. In fact, there is considerable evidence to show that, in the right conditions, there is positive enthusiasm, commitment and a surprising willingness to spend time preparing for consultative exercises on issues of significance and relevance to participants (The National Forum on Health – Canada, Wyman et al. 1999). Capacity building is defined in different ways, depending on the context. One common element is the change and development which takes place as individuals learn new skills and gain in confidence.

In the context of involving citizens in shaping the digital technologies that underpin the information society, some important objectives of capacity building among the individuals responsible for achieving and managing engagement include the following:

- promote widespread understanding of the need for change;
- promulgate awareness of the wide-ranging benefits of participation/engagement for individuals and their communities;
- provide realistic and flexible guidance on how to achieve such understanding;
- promote the development of skills and knowledge necessary for citizens and other stakeholders to make a meaningful contribution to ICT design – tailored to the needs and context;
- enable citizens and relevant others to arrive at consensus on design decisions;

- promote understanding of sociotechnical concepts, i.e. the relationship between different elements of the system such that policy can influence technology and vice versa;
- give confidence in asking 'know why' questions before jumping to the 'know how'.

Preparing staff to carry out their responsibilities for involving members of the community in an ICT development project will be helped by an imaginative awareness and education programme. This should be defined and designed wherever possible in consultation with the people for whom it is intended. Those responsible for leading and managing the change need leadership and facilitation skills.

Equally, preparing citizens is an essential part of capacity building in society. The quality of their contributions to design outcomes is of course determined by the capacity of participants to engage in the various stages of a typical design life-cycle. Developing this capacity begins with giving confidence to members of the public that they have a significant part to play. Through understanding that they really can participate usefully in areas where they probably feel they have little to contribute – and would probably not be heard anyway – is a critical step in eliciting willingness of citizens to engage with an ICT project. It is therefore important to show that citizens can and have played a constructive part in project processes such as the following:

- activities which shape the social context in which ICTs are used;
- the evaluation of technological solutions at the conceptual stage – evaluating the potential implications not just in terms of functionality or ease of use, but for quality of life, sustainability, ethical issues etc.;
- identification and specification of their requirements (as input to the detailed shaping of socio-technical systems);
- evaluation of detailed sociotechnical design options against their requirements;
- developing 'ownership' of the sociotechnical solutions which are implemented;
- monitoring progress and contributing towards further evolution where appropriate.

Clearly the language used above would need to be 'translated' into meaningful colloquial language used by the intended participants. Appropriate real-life examples of actual contributions made by other citizens with whom they can identify, are particularly motivating and reassuring. Seeing the outcomes and impacts that are possible are powerful ways of changing perceptions and expectations.

It is important to make clear to potential participants the difference between those activities which will benefit from the knowledge, skills and capabilities that most people already have – such as those listed below and those where some preparation and opportunities for learning are required e.g. in areas associated with technical aspects of ICT developments. Regarding the skills which citizens have in abundance, it will be important to emphasise that it is capacities such as those listed below – and not their knowledge of ICT – that are most relevant and important in shaping ICT developments.

To inform ICT design decisions citizens/users can do the following:

- use their imagination and creativity as well as their knowledge of their context and experience to envision the possibilities;
- consider the implications and the potential of emerging technologies for their lives;
- be demanding, informed and willing to 'co-create' the systems, products and services best suited to their lives;
- exert their power and influence to significant effect by asking critical questions;
- engage in considered reflection to pre-empt or reduce the negative unintended effects of new technologies;
- provide inputs to the design decision-making process that reflect the diversity and richness of their own experience.

In addition to the above capabilities, there are some specific skills which are frequently of value and relevance in design exercises of many kinds. These include envisioning, knowledge sharing, requirements shaping, consensus building and conflict resolution. It is has already been indicated that an active educational process and appropriate learning opportunities, supported by tools and techniques described in Chapter 9, may be required to promote development of these skills.

As indicated above, an appropriate organisational infrastructure will be essential to launch a viable citizen engagement strategy and to support engagement processes. Setting up organizational infrastructure to facilitate and enable citizen engagement processes in the context of on-going ICT projects is best done in advance of launching engagement processes. More typically, this happens as an ad hoc response to developments. For example, pressures from national government to implement local e-government in the UK has required local councils to find their own ways of developing structures and procedures to support the implementation. The trial and error involved has been an expensive process and slowed up the delivery of e-services. For example, people who are in job roles that require them to

interact with citizens – gathering opinions, eliciting information needs, or seeking participation of the hard-to-hear, have in many cases, lacked the necessary guidance and training. (This issue of improved sharing knowledge and experience will be addressed in more detail in subsequent sections).

8.4 Changing Organizational Culture

Shifting the focus of ICT development projects from the technical to the sociotechnical represents a significant change in culture for many IT departments and organizations engaged in developing systems and services for the public. For citizen engagement to become a routine and, more importantly, a valued part of ICT developments, the organisational context must be one that promotes, supports and rewards citizen engagement activities.

A first step is to create readiness for change and for this to happen requires that there is understanding of the need to change. Achieving the shift in ICT design focus, like any other major change, will be facilitated by using an established change management approach. This involves the three steps (see Gleicher's formula – Chapter 7) to be addressed at the project level, within the organizations where ICT developments take place, and in wider society. Essentially, everyone involved in making the shift towards citizen participation/engagement in ICT development needs to have the opportunity to develop the following:

- understanding of the need for change – the 'Know Why' of Citizen Engagement in ICT design;
- knowledge of what needs to be done to achieve the vision – the 'Know What'of Citizen Engagement in ICT design;
- knowledge and skills to carry out the necessary steps – the 'Know How' of Citizen Engagement in ICT design.

As already described in 8.2.2, an important precursor to achieving the engagement of citizens/users as a routine matter in ICT development projects is achieving a shift in the design focus of key stakeholders (e.g. senior managers, project managers, IT development staff, practitioners) from a technical to a sociotechnical one. This requires changing attitudes and perceptions. With the objective of persuading these role holders to take account of human, social and organisational concerns as a normal part of the project agenda throughout the development cycle. Educational processes

such as those outlined in the Action Plan are likely to be essential to succeed in meeting this objective.

To prepare people, such as staff in local councils, to engage with citizens in the context of ICT projects there is an abundance of educational and experiential learning material which is described in Chapter 9. Following good practice in change management it may be helpful to begin the educational process by communicating some key learning points such as those presented below. It is important to stress that these are for illustrative purposes only – and not to be regarded as a prescribed or standard approach to apply in all situations. For new information and concepts to be heard and taken on board, material has to be tailored to context and to the people it is intended to inform. In all cases presentations should be used only as an introduction and as a catalyst for discussion to help people to think through and explore the ideas and their implications and to articulate their ideas. They can helpfully set the scene for further learning opportunities but are far from adequate without a supporting programme for building capacity.

8.4.1 Key Learning Points: The 'Know Why', 'Know What' and 'Know How' of Citizen Engagement

Understanding the need for change – the 'Know Why'

Why the need for a shift to involve citizens?

- high cost of disappointing delivery of ICT
- poor match with needs of citizens
- dissatisfaction of citizens/users
- low level of take-up of electronic services

Limitations of current ICT design approach

- focus is on the delivery of a technical solution
- traditional design roles (software designer, programmer etc) predominate
- limited and low level of citizen/user influence or shaping of ICT design decisions
- lack of awareness and skills of participatory methods for involving citizens/users

- perceived high costs and risk of delays associated with involving users are deterrents of a change in focus

The benefits / outcomes of involving citizens – some examples

- better understanding of citizen's needs and priorities
- design outcomes meet the needs of citizens better
- greater satisfaction with ICT-enabled services
- improved take-up of services
- greater confidence and empowerment of citizens
- enhanced democracy

Sharing the Vision of what needs to be done – the 'Know What'

What needs to be done?

- gain the 'buy-in' of key role holders (CEO, IT managers, etc) to achieve the shift
- gain support and resources to: build the capacity, i.e. develop knowledge, understanding and skills of all stakeholders (e.g. citizens, ICT project staff, customer liaison personnel etc.), and create the infrastructure to support the participation/engagement of people in ICT developments

What all key stakeholders need to know

- the costs/consequences of the current approach (the need for change)
- the advantages of doing things differently (the benefits of involving citizens)
- different ways of doing things successfully (good practice exists)
- how to do things differently (tools and techniques)
- opportunities and support to learn new ways of doing things will be available (training and coaching etc.)
- success will be recognised (performance appraisal will include citizen participation/engagement activities)

Providing knowledge and skills to carry out the necessary steps – the 'Know How'

How to create the infrastructure for citizen engagement?

- define roles required – recruit and train people to fill them
- define and develop relevant learning opportunities for citizens and other stakeholders
- select appropriate tools and techniques to support the participation/engagement of citizens and other stakeholders

How to build capacity – essential skills include:

- leadership
- facilitation
- envisioning
- knowledge sharing
- requirements shaping
- consensus building
- conflict resolution

8.5 Sharing the Knowledge

There is now extensive knowledge available about effective citizen engagement. Promulgating the learning is most pressing in order to make more visible and tangible the limitless potential of the vast pool of human knowledge and diverse capabilities of people everywhere. This rich resource residing in citizens is available to inform and enhance the design of digital futures but is largely unappreciated and untapped. An effective citizen engagement strategy will need to include a wide variety of multimedia education and communication material tailored to convey and share the knowledge and learning of the processes involved. It is often the case that the most effective way of persuading individuals to do things differently is to show them a different approach in action. This may involve demonstrating the methods used, the processes involved, the issues arising including problems encountered, and how these were tackled and the outcomes and impacts. Showcasing best practice can be particularly powerful and effective. As an example of this, Chapter 4 reports on a major undertaking

in Canada (K-Net) (see Beaton (2004) which was selected for government funding as an exemplary 'Smart Community' project and which has been extensively documented and reported.

8.6 Conclusions

The strategies presented in this chapter will establish processes for engaging citizens and delivering more effective systems and services for the public. An impressive array of techniques and tools are available to support the strategies and these are examined in the next chapter. The know-how presented has been distilled from examining examples of citizen participation and engagement worldwide and from developing the integrated theoretical framework described in Chapter 7. It is likely to have resonance and relevance to many people in the public sector, in e-business and in a variety of other contexts who are actively engaged with design and delivery of ICT-based developments for use by the general public.

Some of the individuals involved are already acutely aware of the limitations of current approaches and open to the idea of doing things differently. In such cases, individuals need support and guidance, tools and techniques, and new approaches to find and adopt appropriate new ways of working which embrace the principle of citizen engagement. Others may not yet be persuaded of the need for change. For example, the Demos Project, co-funded by the European Commission, had the primary aim of increasing and enhancing citizen participation in local government. The project linked eight city councils in seven countries with research organisations across Europe. One of the findings of the research was that "*the attitude of government officers loath to share control with citizens*" was a barrier to citizen engagement (Demos 2004). These findings are not consistent with the authors' experiences of working with local councils on e-government implementations in the UK. We found local government staff working at grass-roots in the community are committed to consulting and engaging with citizens – especially the 'hard to hear' groups – but expressing uncertainty about how to go about this and apprehensive about the adequacy of their skills for this process.

Beyond this, for digital technologies to begin to transform lives in significant ways on a societal scale, involves both major institutional change and behavioural change of people. It is often the case that such changes come about reactively as institutions and individuals strive to exploit and accommodate new technologies in their lives. Now, in the early 21st century a far more pro-active approach is within our grasp. The convergence

of telecommunications and information technologies alongside the burgeoning knowledge and interest in promoting participation of citizens in civic society means that it is timely to find new answers to old problems. A great diversity of wired and wireless technologies to enable fundamentally new ways of working, learning, communicating and influencing are coming on stream with great rapidity. Harnessing these to create desirable digital futures requires a major shift in culture surrounding the developments of ICT systems, services and projects. What is needed now for this to happen is leadership in society and the political will to take action to achieve this change. How to achieve this is discussed in the final chapter.

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